



General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales

Geoffrey Chaucer

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Presents the text of Chaucer's *General Prologue*, from the Riverside text with support on the portraits of individual pilgrims. This edition has notes on the text and an Approaches section offering commentary and activities on key themes, such as Chaucer's portrayal of medieval society and his ironical tone.

General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales Details

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Author : Geoffrey Chaucer

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Keith says

In this review, I'm mainly concentrating on the edition I read (Oxford Student Texts edited by Peter Mack and Chris Walton) rather than Chaucer's work itself. As you can see in my overall review of The Canterbury Tales (here <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>), I've been searching for an edition that provides the historical and cultural context as well as makes reading the original Middle English as easy as possible. On that quest, I decided to look into some of the editions that focus on one or two tales per book.

With some hope I picked up the Oxford Student Text version. It provides an excellent historical background and cultural context. I finished the Prologue with a much better understanding of the characters how they were stereotypically presented in works around Chaucer's time (particularly in what's called Estates Satires). It's interesting to see how Chaucer used and played off these stereotypes.

On the downside, this edition, like commonly used Riverside edition, puts the text glosses at the end of the book, so the reader must constantly be going back and forth to understand what they are reading. Can you get a gist of what's going on without the glosses? I guess so. But for someone seeking a deeper reading, this is quite a frustrating process. Worse still, many difficult passages are not glossed at all. I guess you're supposed to go to the glossary to figure it out.

This series also seems targeted to a high school readership (although a high school readership with a remarkably good understanding of Middle English). The rest of the book is written as a classroom guide full of questions to consider. It seems to talk down to the reader.

While this edition is an improvement over the standard Riverside edition by itself, my quest continues for a thoroughly annotated version of the Tales that is easy to read and provides a deeper understanding of the work. Stay tuned.

Kira says

The Canterbury Tales was a difficult story for me to comprehend. Although short, it was too confusing with all of the main characters being talked about. All of the prologue does is introduce the characters who are going to visit the religious memorial.

Katelyn says

Interesting but it is a little too descriptive. I'm sure this sets up the stories nicely, as we get to know the characters fairly well through the prologue; however, I personally feel as though it is too much no matter how beautiful the language is.

Sobia says

Archaic English was sooo annoying !!!

Oliver says

Positively Medieval! I had a go at this after reading A Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England. Chaucer has somehow got easier to read with age, and I'd forgotten all the rhyming couplets. On to some tales...

Luke says

If read as a study of characterization, this is the best extant example in the English language (or middle English, if you're not reading a translation). If you want story, this won't even get you started on your pilgrimage.

Cristóbal G. Torrubia says

Un clásico que te ayuda a comprender un poco mejor la sociedad medieval de por entonces.

Phil says

This is the first stage of my plan to read the whole of The Canterbury Tales and the works of Shakespeare one at a time in between more easy-reading. The General Prologue I've read many times before, so it was an easy introduction. Always a surprise as to how easy it is to make sense of it, as it the vibrant way in which the characters are introduced. Next up The Knight's Tale in a month or so.

Vaishali says

** Note: I'm reading each Tale piecemeal to ensure I complete the entire massive work.

What a synopsis! Masterful word weaving and multi-dimensional characters. I can't wait to read the rest of the Tales.

I recommend first listening to Dr. Masullo's video on Middle English etymology:
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLKAD...>)

I then listened to Prof. Andrew Keating's lovely rendering of Nevill Coghill's

translation:(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3YP2...>)

Natalie says

I'd forgotten how hard Old English was to read, took me an hour to get through this tiny book, and boy did I have a headache after, but it was great fun deciphering it again, and good practise, looking forward to reading more of the tales now!

Nadia Theresa says

Whilst Middle English can be a bit of a struggle to begin with, I am learning to appreciate Chaucer's gentle satire.

Samantha Maloney says

I love the idea of the canterbury tales, and Chaucer's framing technique is ingenious. Reading it in the original is middle english can at times be difficult, but if you persevere, it will be worth your while. I believe there is value to reading the original. Translations can be helpful, but you often times loose the essentially remarkable features (language, prosody) that Chaucer included.

Moonlight says

3.5 STARS

Read for my English literature a-level.

Lynne says

Although studied for A Level English years ago, it is thanks to The Archers that this has been reread, and it has to be said, finally, fully appreciated. Luckily, in the years that have passed since those days as a 16 year old trying to translate this (very badly, it must be said) the familiarity with Middle English has hugely increased so that it is now enjoyable.

Each pilgrim is slyly described in Chaucer's typical witty style and seemed, surprisingly like distant relatives, infrequently seen yet consistently somehow a part of life.

Thank you Lynda Snell!

Italia8989 says

Dumbed-down transliterations of Old English may be easier to read, but they are not exciting.

The entirety of this Prologue would be absolutely nonsensical to anyone who did not have historical background of the Catholic Church, and particularly the Catholic Church in 13th-century England. The Church paid for people's sins on indulgences, enabling them to become rich. Therefore any vow of poverty or paying of their federal income tax was negligent.

However, there were some who were excited to take this pilgrimage because they wanted to go to learn more about their religion. This time is reminiscent of our own in 2016: the good and the bad of avarice. Coming from a positive light, it manages to sort out the diamonds from the rough.

Many of the pilgrims described are robust or greedy and often both. But there is always the nerd (Oxford Cleric), the valiant one (Knight), the lustful adolescent male (the Knight's Son), etc. It sounds a lot like real life because everyone is quirky. The narrator is not judgmental compared to most people of today, but he is opinionated. I would like to know more about his character because then I would be able to determine whether he is reliable in his connotations.

Overall, there is nothing wrong with this and it is a rather pleasant, historical facet of the times. It is definitely something worth pursuing further in the future.
